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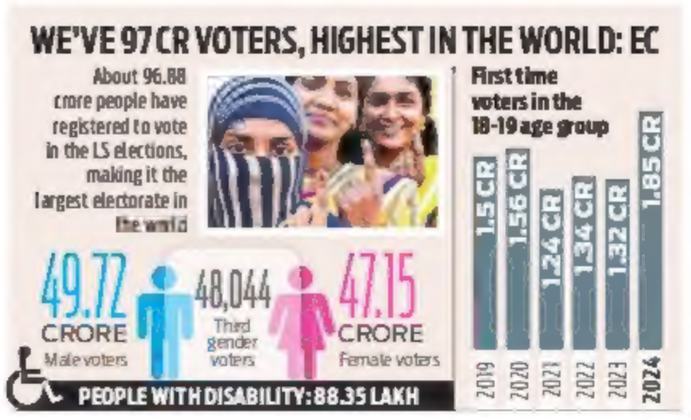



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# RAO, CHARAN, MSS IN BHARAT RATNA BASKET

Charan Singh

P V Narasimha Rao

M S Swaminathan

**Buzz on Badal, Biju**

Other names that are doing the rounds in political circles for the Bharat Ratna are Bal Thackeray, Biju Patnaik, Anna Hazare, Manmohan Singh, Parkash Singh Badal and N T Rama Rao

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

THE season for Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian award, appears to be in full bloom with the Centre on Friday adding three more distinguished personalities to the list — former prime ministers P V Narasimha Rao and Chaudhary Charan Singh, and celebrated agricultural scientist Dr M S Swaminathan.

The year began with veteran Bihar socialist leader and former chief minister Karpoori Thakur being conferred the award (posthumously), followed by BJP veteran and former deputy prime minister L K Advani.

The awards came ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, and the payback was already visible with Charan Singh's grandson Jayant Singh indicating his Rashtriya Lok Dal could switch from the opposition INDIA bloc to the NDA. By adding Rao to the list, the BJP possibly hopes to wrest the legacy of the leader the Congress almost disowned in the Telugu heartland.

Announcing the awards on X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Delighted to share that our former Prime Minister Shri PV Narasimha Rao Garu, will be honoured with the Bharat Ratna." In the next post, Modi announced the Bharat Ratna for Jat icon and former PM Charan Singh. Jayant Singh has the ability to swing Jat votes in west UP. Modi's third post revealed the award for Swaminathan. Both Rao and Swaminathan hail from the South, where the BJP is yet to find its feet.

# Pak stares at hung House as Imran loyalists win big

## PTI claims to have numbers; horse-trading fears as Sharif eyes coalition govt

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

PAKISTAN appeared headed towards a hung Parliament with no clear winner in the general elections after results of 226 out of the 265 seats contested were called on Friday night. With the delayed results still trickling in more than 24 hours after the close of the polls marred by allegations of rigging, independent candidates backed by jailed former Pak PM Imran Khan's party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) seemed to have an edge with 92 seats, followed by Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and Pakistan People's Party contenders at 64 and 50, respectively. Smaller parties bagged 20 seats.

As of now, no party or group seems to be in a position to form government on their own as they are way short of the magic number of 133. Overall, 169 seats are needed to secure a simple majority out of a total of 336 seats in the National Assembly (lower House), which include reserved slots for women and minorities.

PTI supporters protest outside the office of a returning officer in Quetta alleging rigging in Pakistan's national elections | AFP

Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif said his party PML-N is the single largest and hence will try to form a coalition government with the support of other parties. He has asked his brother Shehbaz to approach PPP's Asif Ali Zardari, JUI-F's Fazlur Rehman and MQM-P's Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui to form a coalition government.

Meanwhile, PTI chairman Barrister Gohar Khan ruled out any alliance, claiming the Imran Khan-founded party will be in a position to form government on its own. He claimed the party's tally has crossed 150.

In a statement on X, the party said it won more than 150 NA seats as per the data received in Form 45s, which are the primary source of election results at the lowest level and show the votes for each candidate at each polling station.

Imran Khan, 71, is behind bars and barred from contesting. PTI candidates had to run as independents after they were not allowed to use the party symbol cricket bat.

With PML-N and PTI vying for power, experts flag the prospects of horse trading as independent candidates will be up for grabs.

# 5 dead, 250 injured in U'khand violence, CM calls it planned attack

NARENDRA SETHI @ Dehradun

FIVE persons were killed and over 250 injured in Haldwani as violence broke out following a drive to demolish an unauthorised madrasa and a prayer site on a government property.

Violence broke out on Thursday night after the drive in the Banbhulpura locality of Uttarakhand, Inspector General Nilesh Anand Bharne told this newspaper. Four paramilitary units will be deployed in the riot-hit area on Saturday.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami termed the violence a planned attack, pointing to the stockpiling of arms, stones and petrol bombs.

The police identified 18 individuals responsible for rioting and stone pelting after scanning CCTV footage. All of them are in custody, sources said. The injured include the police and journalists. Banbhulpura continues to be under curfew.

"In compliance with the high court's orders, rigorous actions have been taken against encroachments in Haldwani," District Magistrate Vandana said. "Notices and opportunities for hearings were extended to all parties. Some individuals sought recourse through the HC, while others were granted additional time. In instances where time extensions were not granted, the Public Works Department and the municipal corporation proceeded with the demolition," she added.

Charred remains of vehicles that were set afire following the demolition of an unauthorised madrasa in Haldwani | PTI

EXPRESS READ

**Kamaraj Road stretch to reopen by April**

Bengaluru: The 200-metre stretch of Kamaraj Road, connecting MG Road and Cubbon Road, which was closed for nearly four years, will be reopened for traffic by April, according to a press release issued by BMRCL. The stretch was closed for traffic on June 15, 2019, to build the MG Road Interchange Metro Station. Reopening of the stretch will boost business in the Central Business District and provide motorists easy access to the two roads.

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